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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4329

October 20, 2020

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DIVERSITY
AND INCLUSION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND INVESTIGATIONS
TASK FORCE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION,
CIVIL RIGHTS, AND CIVIL LIBERTIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION
AND CITIZENSHIP

TASK FORCE ON POVERTY AND OPPORTUNITY
VICE CHAIR ON URBAN POVERTY

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Office of the Governor-State of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, TX 78711-2428

Presiding Officer Gloria Canseco
Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council
333 Guadalupe St, Suite 3-900
Austin, TX 78701

Presiding Officer Timothy Brown
Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners
333 Guadalupe St., Suite 3-900
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Governor Abbott, Presiding Officer Canseco and Presiding Officer Brown,

It has come to our attention that the Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners recently changed a rule at their last board meeting on Monday October 12, 2020, which would now allow social workers to deny services to LGBTQIA individuals and individuals with disabilities based on their clients' status. As members of the Texas Congressional delegation, we find this recent removal of non-discrimination protections terribly misguided and ask for your reconsideration and reversal of this rule immediately.

During this pandemic, social workers have taken on an even larger role in protecting their communities by providing emergency resources, housing and employment services, mental health care, and medical casework to name a few. As more people turn to social workers in their time of need, it is shameful for the state to allow discrimination of any individual trying to get the resources they need. During a pandemic, enforcement and protection of non-discrimination rules should be stronger than ever, to ensure our most vulnerable Texans receive assistance during these unprecedented times. This rule change does the exact opposite.

According to news outlets, this rule change was suggested by the Texas Governor's office three days before a scheduled Texas State Board of Social Work Examiners meeting. This rule change, with such a tremendous impact on social workers, LGBTQIA individuals, and individuals with disabilities, should not have been rushed. It is also incredibly problematic that this rule was implemented without proper input and feedback from social workers and/or social worker

representatives and advocacy groups, who would be directly affected by this change. In fact, the Executive Director of the Texas chapter of the National Association of Social Workers has called this rule change “incredibly disheartening.”

For these reasons, we request your reconsideration and reversal of this outrageous rule during the next scheduled board meeting on October 27, 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sylvia R. Garcia".

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

Additional cosigners:

Rep. Veronica Escobar
Rep. Lloyd Doggett
Rep. Colin Allred
Rep. Al Green
Rep. Henry Cuellar
Rep. Marc Veasey
Rep. Vicente Gonzalez
Rep. Joaquin Castro
Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee
Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson